

**Communications Committee Meeting
Minutes
July 17, 2023**

Attendees

CoA Members

Jean Dinwiddie, Co-chair
Beverly Rollins, Co-chair
Virginia Cain
Wayne Berman
David Engel
Arunima Ghosh
Bob Levey
Katie Smith
Marsha Weber

Staff

Jennifer Long, Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services

Important Points/Suggestions Made During the Meeting

- The CoA needs to continue the conversation regarding Senior Fellows; the Commission needs to push for the program to be continued.
- The CoA's budget proposal for a Marketing and Outreach staff person should call for the position to be permanent, even after the ARPA funds run out.
- The Communications Committee is hoping to launch the Ambassador Program in September.
- The Communications Committee is hoping to launch the Library Liaison program in September, too.
- The CoA should request that keeping the CoA website up-to-date be included in the job description of the new person who is hired to handle various County websites.
- The Library Liaisons should place cards in the libraries containing the CoA's website and information about the upcoming Senior Summit.
- Cards with the 240-777-3000 number could also be left at the libraries, and a QR code could be added to show the CoA's website.
- An email should be sent to all of the individuals who attended the CoA's public forum containing a link to the CoA's website. That way more individuals may view the CoA's website.
- Big signs should be made and distributed to the County's libraries containing a QR code to the CoA's website.
- The CoA should be aware of who its friends are on the County Council and also be aware of opportunities to lobby face-to-face with them. The CoA also needs to know what committees those Councilmembers are on.

Meeting Minutes

Roll Call

Jean Dinwiddie called roll. The minutes from the May meeting were approved.

Communications Committee's Budget Priorities

Committee members discussed possible budget proposals the CoA could make to the County Executive and County Council for the FY 2025 budget. David Engel stated that he agrees that there needs to be a full-time Aging and Disability staffer to coordinate the Communications Committee's new Ambassador and Library Liaison programs. He commented that the CoA should call the proposed position a Marketing and Outreach staffer.

It was noted that Mary Anderson no longer works as the HHS liaison to the Public Information Office; she is now with the PIO. Jennifer Long stated that she does not know who at HHS is the CoA's liaison with the PIO is now.

David said that the CoA needs to continue the conversation regarding Senior Fellows; the Commission needs to push for the program to be continued. Marsha Weber said that that program is on life support.

Jean noted that Beverly Rollins and she had a conversation with the newly hired Marketing Broker, Cecily Coleman. Cecily wanted to know more about what the Communications Committee is proposing with regard to the Ambassador and Library Liaison programs. She is an American Rescue Plan Act hire and that funding will only last to 2024.

Bob Levey asked how much money the Committee is asking for with regard to hiring a new staff person. David responded that the ARPA funding is for 2 years, and it amounts to about \$250,000, probably \$125,000 a year. He said that part of the CoA's description for the proposal should call for the work to be continued after the ARPA funds run out.

Jean asked whether, in addition to the A&D staff position, the Committee should develop another proposal, possibly something to do with translation services for County documents. She stated that we should also propose continuing the annual \$18,000 that the County allows for the production of 50+ *in Montgomery County*, ads in the *Beacon* ads, and a few other documents. Marsha asked whether anyone knew where the \$10,000 is that is supposedly allotted to the CoA for publications. She asked, "Is it in the PIO's budget?" It appears to be under the control of the PIO. David noted that continuing the \$18,000 seems reasonable.

David suggested that the CoA include in its proposal money to fund its annual Public Forum. Maybe ask for \$10,000? Virginia Cain asked whether we would have to come up with a topic for the forum before asking for the money, or just ask for forum funding in general. Committee members responded that simply saying that it is for the forum should be enough.

Wayne Berman said that he has heard that the County needs to hire folks who speak different languages to better serve its diverse population. David asked whether the person hired to coordinate the Ambassador Program should be bi-lingual. Jean responded that we should say in our budget proposal to hire someone to serve the County's diverse communities.

Jean asked whether the Committee's second budget proposal should be funding for the forum. Katie Smith agreed that it should.

Ambassador Program

Jean said that the Committee is hoping to launch the Ambassador Program in September.

Library Liaison

Jean reported that the Committee plans to start the Library Liaison program in September, too. An orientation meeting was held last Friday with the Liaison volunteers to let them know what is expected of them.

Website Update

David reported that CoA meeting minutes and agendas are getting updated on the CoA website. Information about the May public forum, however, is not up yet. Jean said that we want to get the Library Liaison and Ambassador Program job descriptions on the website. David stated that CoA documents such as The Life Transitions and the County's "Sell Sheet" (both in English and multi-lingual) are not on it but should be. The site does, however, contain other important older adult documents. Marsha asked why we want the Library Liaison job description on the website. Jean said that we want the program to continue after she and Beverly are no longer on the CoA.

Jean noted that Arunima Ghosh is working with staffer Tremayne Jones to keep the website up-to-date. David stated that he thinks that a new staffer may be hired to keep up the County's Senior website. Jennifer said that she had heard that mentioned but did not know who was spearheading it.

Jean asked whether there is anything CoA members can do to make sure the website gets updated. She said that if a new staffer is hired it may be difficult to get it updated. David suggested that the CoA ask that keeping the CoA website up-to-date be included in the job description for the new hire. He noted that the CoA's new staff liaison, Peter Flandrau, is still involved in his old job and it may be difficult for him to get CoA stuff done.

Wayne asked who is responsible for getting information out about the upcoming Senior Summit. Jean responded that she was not sure, but it likely should be Shawn Brennan. Wayne stated that maybe some information about the Summit and what it will be covering could go out to the County libraries. David commented that information regarding the Summit is on the County's Senior website. Wayne suggested that the Library Liaisons place cards in the libraries with the CoA's website and also information about the Summit. David noted that he asked for extras to be made of the cards with the 240-777-3000 number and those could be left at the libraries, too.

Arunima Ghosh reported that the CoA website looks better than it did, but some things are still missing such as the CoA's June meeting minutes. She noted that QR codes work well for getting out information and should be added to the card that David is talking about. QR codes are better than a piece of paper because you can save it in your electronic device.

Arunima also stated that the meeting minutes from the CoA's May public forum and the corresponding video are in a place that is not readily visible on its website. She suggested that a page of links be added to the website to make it easier to find important information. For one thing, a link to the public forum is needed. Arunima also noted that David may want to send an email to all of the public forum attendees with a link to the CoA website. That way more individuals may view the CoA's website. Also, it would be beneficial if the CoA could get the numbers of the individuals who actually view the site and how many go on to other sites after visiting the CoA's website.

David responded that someone has given the CoA numbers of how many individuals visit its site, but that number is outdated. He said that he would look around to see whether he could get more recent numbers. Arunima stated that she does not think the CoA's website is as useful as it could be. If the CoA can find out how many folks visit its website and then see where those visitors go from there it could be made more useful. She also suggested making a big sign for the libraries with the CoA's website QR code. Beverly and Jean responded that the CoA would probably have to talk with the head librarian, Anita Vassallo, or the individual librarians to see whether the CoA could put up signs.

Beverly asked who is doing public relations for the Senior Summit. Jennifer responded that Shawn Brennan had some Save-the-Date cards made up. David added that 100 folks have already signed up for it, and the hall holds 250. Beverly suggested that the CoA members be advised to sign up for it sooner rather than later in order to get a place.

50+ in Montgomery County Update

Jean reported on the schedule of upcoming 50+ episodes:

- July program—rerun of Older Adults and Older Animals
- August program – Solo Aging
- September program – Summit on Aging/Senior Agenda

She reminded everyone that the 50+ Planning Group meets the first Friday of each month.

Bob Levey closed the meeting suggesting that the CoA should be aware of who its friends are on the County Council and also be aware of opportunities to lobby face-to-face with them. He said that politicians pay attention to older adults and the CoA. David added that the CoA needs to know what committees those Council members are on to make a difference. Bob added that we need to be in tune with the fact that some of the Council members will be running for the County Executive position in the future.

Adjourn

Action Items

- The CoA's website needs to be updated to include:
 - Information about the CoA's May public forum
 - The Library Liaison and Ambassador Program job descriptions
 - CoA documents such as "The Life Transitions" and the County's "Sell Sheet" (both in English and multi-lingual)
 - A page of links to make it easier to find important information such as a link to the public forum
- David will look around to see whether he can get more recent numbers of how many individuals visit the CoA's website.
- The CoA members should be advised to sign up for the Senior Summit sooner rather than later in order to get a seat.